

Romans 12B

[Rom. 12:1](#) ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

[Rom. 12:2](#) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

[Rom. 12:3](#) ¶ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

[Rom. 12:4](#) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

[Rom. 12:5](#) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

[Rom. 12:6](#) Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

[Rom. 12:7](#) if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

[Rom. 12:8](#) or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- Paul takes the doctrine of our salvation and uses it now as a spring to launch us forward onto a new path
 - And this new walk begin inside us
 - Moves between those who are like us in the faith – Christians
 - And our treatment of the world, reflecting the love of Christ to the world
 - Paul will talk in general principles but he uses numerous specific examples as application
 - It's a rich series of chapters for specific guidance on living the Christian walk while awaiting glory
 - But our emphasis is on the principles so we can apply what we learn more broadly
- Last week we examined the three steps to stepping out in this new walk
 - Don't be conformed
 - Renew your mind

- Prove the will of God by approving what is good, acceptable, perfect
- Now having taken these steps – and we never stop working at all three of these steps – then we will begin to move outwardly through a series of impacts from our walk as Christians
 - Our character, the church, all men, the state and society, our Christian liberty, our attitude of love
 - We start with our self perspective
- First, Paul says we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought
 - Don't assign to yourself a greater importance or self-worth than...what?
 - How would I know what my real importance is?
 - May I suggest our importance is always less than we think it is
 - It's hard to be too humble
 - We do nothing apart from Christ, we are nothing apart from Christ
 - While the life we live on earth is all we know and concern ourselves with, a thousands years from now not much that has happened here will cross our minds or anyone else's
 - Only those things we did in obedience to Christ will be remembered, because those things alone glorify Him
 - There will be no glory of man shining in eternity
 - So consistently seek an attitude of humility

[1Pet. 5:5](#) You younger men, likewise, be subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with **humility** toward one another, for **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**

- Resist the urge to speak well of yourself

[Phil. 2:3](#) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with **humility** of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

- Don't seek the praise of men
 - Receive their criticism
 - Accept that we are often wrong and in need of correction
 - Use sound or sober judgment to assess ourselves
 - According to a measure of faith
 - So what is the one reasonable measure of distinction we can use to make personal assessments?
 - Our measure of faith
 - Our spiritual maturity
 - This is the only personal measure that is worth benchmarking
 - Don't use any other measure for assessing yourself
 - The more sober our assessment, the less we will feel like strutting in front of others
 - By the way, did you notice the intriguing way Paul introduced this thought
 - He says by the grace given to me he can say be humble
 - Remember the way Paul received his grace?
 - On the road to Damascus ready to persecute Christians
 - Do you think Paul had an appreciation for how someone can think themselves more important and more "right" and more righteous than they truly are?
 - So, presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice begins with personal humility
- Then in verse 4, Paul moves to a second sphere: how we treat those in the Body of Christ
 - Paul establishes several principles along the way here
 - First, we are not islands
 - We do not exist apart from the rest of the Body of Christ

- And each of us have an assigned role in that organism
 - Do you have an assigned role in your home or business or sports team?
 - Do you feel responsible to play your role properly?
 - Does it bother you if your teammates or family members or coworkers think that you are failing to live up to your responsibilities?
 - Do you feel like you let them down?
- How much more then should we play our proper role within the Body of Christ?
- Paul lists several examples
 - People exercising prophecy, service, teaching, etc.
 - Notice the principle here:
 - 1. These are spiritual gifts, not preferences or moments of opportunity
 - There are a lot of things I could do, but I have been gifted by God to teach His word, so I teach His word to exclusion of virtually anything else I might do
 - 2. Secondly, in serving in your spiritual gift, you will serve with the greatest strength and joy
 - Paul says do whatever we do to the utmost and expect it to satisfy our spirit
 - Beyond serving in our gift, Paul directs the nature of relationships in the church:

[Rom. 12:9](#) ¶ *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*

[Rom. 12:10](#) *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*

[Rom. 12:11](#) *not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

[Rom. 12:12](#) *rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer,*

[Rom. 12:13](#) *contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

- Ready for some more conviction? – 5 verses, but 13 commands for living
 - Love each other without hypocrisy
 - Don't be a different person in and around the church than you are in private or elsewhere
 - Don't love in a superficial way so as to achieve some person gain
 - Abhor what is evil and cling to what is good
 - Give no comfort to the enemy, be a positive witness to your brothers and sisters
 - Be concerned with your moral character
 - Be devoted to one another
 - Christianity lived out is a devotion to an ideal or a way of thought or even a religious system
 - It's a loving devotion to people as a means of giving God thanks and honor
 - Caring for the people is the true heart of any personal ministry
 - Remember, ministry means to serve
 - Give preference to one another in honor
 - Paul provides a balance here
 - We favor Christians in everyday choices and decisions but yet with honor
 - Do not dishonor the Lord in the way we give preference
 - Not lagging behind in diligence
 - You might have thought that our personal diligence in serving God would have been classified earlier as a personal character issue
 - Instead, Paul places it in the category of how we serve the Body

- Don't drag behind the rest but show diligence in your personal pursuit of serving the Lord
- Remain fervent in spirit as you serve the Lord
 - Not easily discouraged by the challenges that are common to all of us
- Rejoicing in hope
 - Keeping the joy of your salvation at the forefront of your personal experience
 - And consistently looking forward to the promises of redemption
- Persevering in tribulation
 - Here's another one that you might have thought fit better with personal development
 - But it's a form of encouragement for the church as a whole when we persevere
 - Just the fact that Paul gives this exhortation is evidence in itself that a Christian can fail in their witness in the face of tribulation
 - Just ask the Apostle Peter how that works
- Devoted to prayer
 - Another Christian duty we could talk all week about
- Likewise contributing to the needs of the saints
 - Though the requirement to tithe is a requirement under the Law and not a command of the New Covenant believer
 - In its place is a command to love one another, which includes contributing to the needs of the saints
- Finally, practicing hospitality
 - Opening your home, giving your time, sharing a meal, helping in the yard or with children

- Showing the love of Christ by making other people's lives more comfortable and enriched
- So if these are the ways we love one another, then how do we treat unbelievers?
 - Well, that other stuff was tough, but now we get to the easy stuff

[Rom. 12:14](#) ¶ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

[Rom. 12:15](#) Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

[Rom. 12:16](#) Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

[Rom. 12:17](#) Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

[Rom. 12:18](#) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

[Rom. 12:19](#) Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

[Rom. 12:20](#) "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."

[Rom. 12:21](#) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- Now we move from loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, to loving our potential brothers and sisters
 - Remember the three underlying principles for making yourself a living sacrifice for God?
 - The first was not to be conformed to the world
 - Here is the list of stark realities for how we do that
 - First, show God's love to those who would persecute us
 - Bless them, don't curse them
 - Instead, we pray for those who persecute
 - Not the world's approach
 - And we do this to be Christ-like, who suffered the ultimate persecution

[John 15:20](#) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not **greater than** his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

- We show empathy and interest in the lives of others, especially in the high and low points
 - I believe that part of the reason we do this is that love has its greatest opportunity to reach the heart in such moments
- Then Paul offers the same exhortation for the world that he gave for the church
 - Resist the urge to show pride, especially when that pride causes us to distance ourselves from certain people
 - The application for our work in presenting the gospel should be clear here
 - We may be called to minister to people who don't appeal to our flesh and human nature
 - Yet God is prepared to bring them grace through us
- Verse 17, never repay evil
 - When someone does the wrong thing to us, we will resist the urge to retaliate
 - In word, deed or thought
 - And a corollary is that we will respect what is right in the sight of all men
 - Do you realize how far reaching this kind of love is?
 - When the nation elects someone we don't like, we respect that decision and honor it
 - When our employer requires certain dress code, we honor it
 - Are there limits to this command?
 - Certainly. If what men respect reaches the point (as it often can) of violating what God commands
- Which is why Paul follows immediately with verse 18, be at peace with all men, if possible, so far as it depends on you

- Our goal is peace
 - But Paul acknowledges that it isn't always possible
 - And as long as it depends on us, we can maintain peace
 - But sometimes peace isn't possible, because others force us into a violent situation or one where we must take defensive action
- But then Paul adds the other guardrail in verse 20
 - While we can't always achieve peace much as we try
 - When peace breaks down in our relationships, we can't use that as excuse to go beyond what's necessary to defend an attack or escape
 - We can't turn the tables and become the aggressor so as to take vengeance
 - We're talking about a loving way to respond to our enemies
- Paul adds an interesting comment to support his conclusion
 - We actually further our own cause when we step back and allow God to visit His wrath in place of ours
 - If you remember that God declares we are His children and that He gives good gifts, then we can stand assured that our trials do not go unnoticed
 - But we also know that saints are martyred at times and persecuted often
 - God obviously permits this
 - But then He tells those who are persecuted that they might receive a special crown for having endured that fate
 - So whatever God may be prepared to do on our behalf, it's clearly not focused in the here and now
 - It's eternal...and so must be our perspective

- When we see our attackers as a target for our own anger and retribution, we short circuit God's process in two ways
 - First, when we lose sight of eternity, we decide that retribution must happen now
 - But what if God was working to bring this person to faith
 - In ignorance, you are trying to take vengeance against a future brother or sister
 - On the other hand, if this person is not destined to believe, then God's plan for future vengeance is far greater than anything you will accomplish
 - You simply sin and do damage to yourself in eternal terms
 - You lose when you sin
- So don't be overcome by evil (conquered)
 - But rather, you should conquer or prevail over evil
 - Like Christ conquered the world through His own death, not by calling down a legion on angels when He was attacked
- We've seen relationships with our brothers and sisters, then our relationships with unbelievers, now with society and the state generally

[Rom. 13:1](#) ¶ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

[Rom. 13:2](#) Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

[Rom. 13:3](#) For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

[Rom. 13:4](#) for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

[Rom. 13:5](#) Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

[Rom. 13:6](#) For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

[Rom. 13:7](#) Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

- Another important principle
 - Christians are in subjection to government
 - But that doesn't necessarily mean we obey every statute or command of government
 - How can someone be in subjection to government but not necessarily obey the government in everything?
 - Submission is a heart attitude
 - We submit from a heart of love and a desire to reflect Christ's love to the world
 - Therefore, when governments call us to live in unholy ways, we will disregard those commands, but we will continue to submit to the government
 - Which means we willingly submit to the authority when it brings punishment upon us
 - Just as Christians willingly went to the death for failing to declare Caesar was lord
 - Or even Christ Himself went willingly to a Roman cross according to the judgments of men
- Why does Paul want us to live this way?
 - First, remember that God is in control
 - Governments rise and fall according to His plan and power
 - So as Paul says, when we resist their authority, we resist God
 - By resist, Paul means seeking to undermine them or take up arms against those placed in power over us
 - Secondly, our submission builds godly character
 - Paul says in verse 3 that when we submit to authority, we should expect good things in general
 - And the alternative is to have no fear of authority
 - That hardly leads to better character and behavior

- When we are seen as agreeing with authority, good things will come our way in general
- Third, God has given us state authority for our good, Paul says
 - But if we are determined to live in evil ways, opposing government rule, Paul says be afraid
 - It bears the sword for the very reason that God wants evil to feel His wrath
 - God granted this authority to mankind after the flood

[Gen. 9:5](#) "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

[Gen. 9:6](#) "Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.

- So government works to our own good in limiting evil's reach
- Finally, we are in submission for conscience's sake
 - To do what is right in God's eyes requires that we submit to government, even when government is wrong, in which case we submit to discipline when we disobey
 - The ultimate answer for why is that if God is in control, we have to trust that in causing us to be subjected to government persecution God is achieving some good through our obedience
 - And ultimately, He accomplishes more good through our obedience than if we were to escape persecution
 - How about the example of Christ on the cross?
- Next week we continue with our obligations to society and our Christian liberty